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THE LETTERS OF EDWARD GIBBON.

WHEN a new edition of Gibbon's *Letters* was printed in 1896 it was heralded as a great advance upon the edition of Lord Sheffield, the first editor of Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*. The Introduction by the present Earl of Sheffield and the preface by the editor, R. E. Prothero, seem to carry the idea that all letters available, especially all in the possession of the Sheffield family, have been given to the world. The former says,

‘The Letters of the historian, the bulk of which were addressed to Lord Sheffield and his family, were published in part by my grandfather in one or other of the editions of *The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon*. But in this collection many letters were omitted, and most of them were printed with some omissions and variations. These omissions have now been restored; and the Letters, like the other papers of our author, are now for the first time given to the world in the form in which they were composed.’

In addition to this Mr. Prothero says,

‘By far the greater number of the letters now appear for the first time; but portions of the correspondence, marked in this edition with asterisks, were printed by Lord Sheffield shortly after Gibbon's death. These published portions were treated by the editor with great tact and more freedom. . . . In this edition the letters are printed as they were written.’

Most reviews that I have seen also give credit to the new publication, not only for the large number of new letters, but also by implication for the only complete edition of the correspondence. It was a great surprise therefore to find, on making a careful examination of the work, that our debt to the new editor is by no means so great as we

wish it were. A comparison of the letters in the first and second editions of the *Miscellaneous Works* (1796, 1814)¹ with the new *Letters* shows the omission of a considerable number by no means lacking in value. Besides, there has evidently been no attempt to gather the Gibbon letters from various scattered, but easily accessible, sources. The importance of these is such that I propose to give lists of those found (1) in the *Miscellaneous Works*, and (2) in other places, so far as they have come to my notice in a study of Gibbon. The numbers at the beginning of the first list are those in *Miscellaneous Works*, second edition 1814; those at the end of each reference, the volume and page of the same edition. The description of the letters is also that of the first editor, but some remarks are added in parentheses. The first list, containing thirty-six letters written by Gibbon, is as follows :

6. To M. Gesner, on Horace and Catullus (no date, but no doubt 1757); I, 502.
8. To M. Gesner, same subject continued (no date); I, 515.
9. To . . . on the government of Berne. (Really a treatise on the subject, written as if by a traveler in Switzerland; no date but probably about the time of Gibbon's first leaving Lausanne, 1758); II, 1-32.
10. To Mrs. Porten (dated Lausanne, 1756); II, 33.
16. To his father, on his Paris visit, dated Paris, Feb. 24, 1763; II, 54.
20. To G. L. Scott, Esq., proposing the establishment of a Journal of English Literature by Scott, Deyverdun and himself. Dated Buriton, Oct. 19, 1767; II, 68.
34. To Mr. Holroyd, on Junius's letters. Dated Boodle's, Dec. 1772; II, 97.
42. To the same, mainly on personal affairs. Dated 1774; II, 116.
92. To Dr. Watson, thanking him for his Remarks on Mr. Gibbon's History, and desiring his acquaintance. Dated Bentinck St., Nov. 2, 1776; II, 180.
97. To Madame Necker, thanking her for her invitation to Paris and recommending M. de Texier to M. Necker. Dated London, Nov. 26, 1776; II, 186.
110. To Mr. Holroyd, on his History. Dated Paris, July 14, 1777; II, 201.

¹ Curiously enough, the dates of these editions are wrongly given the only time they are referred to in the Introductions of both the *Letters* and the *Autobiographies*. The mistake is perhaps due to copying one of the usually accurate Lowndes.

111. To Dr. Robertson, on the latter's History of America. Dated Paris, 1777 (about June or July); II, 201.
122. To Dr. Chelsum, on returning the latter's attack on the Decline and Fall. Dated Bentinck St., Feb. 20, 1778; II, 217.
134. To Mr. Holroyd, on political affairs. Dated May 7, 1779; II, 230.
161. To Dr. Priestley, on receiving the History of the Corruptions of Christianity. Dated Jan. 23, 1783; II, 265. (This and the two following letters were printed by Priestley in a volume of sermons, published soon after Gibbon's death.)
163. To the same, declining further correspondence with him. Dated Bentinck St., Feb. 6, 1783; II, 269.
165. To the same, forbidding the publication of his letters. Dated Feb. 23, 1783; II, 271.
167. To Lord Thurlow, offering himself for the diplomatic service; II, 272. (No date, but clearly relating to the negotiations for peace with America in 1783.)
176. To Deyverdun, on the projected retirement to Lausanne. Dated Sheffield Place, July 31, 1783; II, 307.
181. To Lord [Loughborough?], offering to accept employment at the court of France. (No date, but probably about August, 1783); II, 317.
184. To Deyverdun, postponing his journey to Lausanne until he shall hear again from the latter. Dated London, Sept. 9, 1783; II, 320.
195. To Mrs. Porten, on his life at Lausanne. Dated Dec. 27, 1783; II, 340. (In a note to a letter from Gibbon to his step-mother, bearing the same date, Prothero mentions the above as being similar in expressions, and implies that perhaps Lord Sheffield had altered the names and sentences; see Letters II, 87.)
202. To Madame de Severy. Dated Lausanne, Oct. 19, 1784; II, 364.
208. To Sir Stanier Porten, on his aunt Catherine Porten's death. Dated Lausanne, May 12, 1786; II, 392.
214. To Madame de Severy, inviting her son to accompany him to England. Dated Lausanne, Sept. 1, 1787; II, 404.
215. To M. de Severy, announcing arrival of M. Wilhelm de Severy in England. Dated Sheffield Place, Nov. 4, 1787; II, 409.
218. To Madame de Severy. Dated Sheffield Place, Jan. 17, 1788; II, 413.
224. To M. de Severy, on his departure for Lausanne. Dated Sheffield Place, June 30, 1788; II, 422.
227. To S. E. M. L'Avoyer de Sinner, with thanks for the restoration of some wine which had been seized. (No date, but answered by Sinner, Sept. 28, 1788); II, 427.
230. To Lady Porten, on Sir Stanier's death. Dated Lausanne, June 27, 1789; II, 429.
- [Unnumbered.] To the Honorable Miss Holroyd, on affairs in Switzerland. Dated Lausanne, Nov. 9, 1791; I, 333.
253. To Lady Elizabeth Foster, on his intended visit to England and various other affairs. Dated Lausanne, Nov. 8, 1792; II, 471.

[Unnumbered.] To the Honorable Miss Holroyd, requesting an account of the death of the Archbishop of Arles. Dated Lausanne, Nov. 10, 1792 ; I, 369.

256. To Lady Elizabeth Foster, on French affairs, etc. Dated Lausanne, April 4, 1793 ; II, 486.

261. To Mr. John Pinkerton, on publishing the ancient English Historians. Dated Sheffield Place, July 25, 1793 ; II, 492.

262. To Lord Auckland. Dated St. James St., Nov. 26, 1793 ; II, 495.

The second list contains letters by Gibbon published in *Le Salon de Madame Necker*¹ by M. d'Haussonville, and a few from *The Gentlemen's Magazine*, from *Notes and Queries*, and from Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*. Seven letters to Lord Eliot, Gibbon's kinsman, which relate to his parliamentary life, are said to exist at Port Eliot. Cornwall ; see report of the *Historical Manuscripts Commission* I, 41.

From *Le Salon de Madame Necker* :

To Mdlle. Curchod ; fall of 1757. I, 37.

To Mdlle. Curchod ; two letters, Nov. 1757. I, 37, 41.

To Mdlle. Curchod ; Feb. 9, 1758. I, 47.

To Mdlle. Curchod ; Aug. 24, 1762. I, 52.

To Mdlle. Curchod ; June 23, 1763. I, 61.

To Mme. Necker ; about March, 1781. I, 71.

To Mme. Necker ; extract only, June 1781. II, 144.

Not only are some of these incomplete, but others are mentioned as existing in the Neckers' baronial mansion at Coppet, of which copies could no doubt be obtained.

From the *Gentleman's Magazine* :

To Cave, printer of the Gentleman's Magazine, about Gibbon's family ; Feb. 24, 1792. G. M. LXIV, 5.

To J. Nichols about family ; Jan. 16, 1793. G. M. LXVI, 459.

To John Pinkerton about historical series ; July 25, 1793. G. M. LXVIII, 914.

To Samuel Egerton Brydges about family ; Aug. 7, 1793. G. M. LXVII, 916 ; also in *Autobiography of Sir Egerton Brydges* I, 225.

¹ This is a republication of essays which appeared first in *Revue de Deux Mondes* during 1880 and 1881. An English translation was made by H. M. Trollope in 1882, and the references are to volume and page of his edition.

From *Notes and Queries* :

To neighbor at Buriton, apologizing for unwittingly trespassing on his property; Nov. 16, 1758. First Series IX, 511.

To Francis Hugonin, on affairs of the estate, except for a reference or two to politics; June 6, 1782. Second Series III, 145; also in Hampshire Repository.

To Becket, bookseller, about books and the *Mémoires Littéraires*. Second Series III, 365.

From Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors* :

To Lord Loughborough, congratulating him on being made Chancellor; Feb. 23, 1793. Permission to print this letter in *Miscellaneous Works* was refused Lord Sheffield by Loughborough.

In referring to these omitted letters I can not refrain from mentioning that Gibbon seems to have been a frequent correspondent of Horace Walpole. Whether it is possible to recover any such letters I do not know, but they would probably be of special value as giving, to a greater extent than any others, Gibbon's estimates of books and literary men.

In a collection of letters the main interest is naturally in those written by the man himself, rather than in those addressed to him. Yet sometimes the latter are important, as either supplying connecting links or giving estimates of the man and his work by those whose opinions are of special value. For the latter reason, no doubt, Lord Sheffield printed in the *Miscellaneous Works* many letters written to Gibbon by eminent men. The new editor of the *Letters* has omitted almost all of these, but has added in their place some from Lord Sheffield, all of which had been omitted by the latter with becoming modesty. As most of Lord Sheffield's letters relate mainly to business affairs, it is little to say that they are but slight compensation for those from such men as Crevier, Gesner, Dr. Hurd, Garrick, Walpole, Hume, Robertson, and others. So important are many of these that a list of those accessible are here given. The numbers at the beginning, or in parentheses, are those of Lord Sheffield's second edition (1814). Letters 1 to 7 are in vol. I, all others in vol. II.

From *The Miscellaneous Works* :

1. From M. Crevier ; Paris, Aug. 7, 1756.
- 2, 3. From M. Allemand ; Bex, Sept. 14, Oct. 12, 1756.
- 4, 5. From Professor Breitinger ; Zurich, Oct. 22, 1756, Mar. 1, 1757.
7. From M. Gesner ; Göttingen, Feb. 12, 1758.
11. From Dr. Waldegrave ; Washington near Storrington, Dec. 7, 1758.
13. From Mr. Mallet ; 1761.
14. From Mr. George L. Scott ; London, May 7, 1762. (65) Dec. 29, 1776.
31. From Dr. Hurd, in answer to Gibbon's on the book of Daniel ; Thurcaston, Aug. 29, 1772.
37. From Mr. Whitaker ; Manchester, July 20, 1773. (68) Feb. 24, (69) Mar. 26, (70) Apr. 21, (71) May 11, 1776.
63. From W. Strahan, the publisher, regarding the History ; London, Oct. 8, 1775.
72. From Joseph Warton ; Winchester, Mar. 11, 1776.
73. From David Garrick ; London, Mar. 9, 1776.
- 74-77. From Horace Walpole ; no dates.
79. From Adam Ferguson ; Edinburgh, Mar. 19, (81) Apr. 18, 1776.
86. From Mme. Necker ; Paris, July 29, (91) Jan. 23, 1776. (100) Jan. 23, 1777. (148) Apr. 21, 1781. (236-251) Coppet and Geneva, 1791-1793.
93. From Dr. Watson ; Cambridge, Nov. 4, 1776. (131) Jan. 14, 1779.
96. From M. Suard ; Paris, Sept. 25, 1776.
98. From M. de Septchenes ; Paris, Dec. 28, 1776.
109. From Dr. Robertson ; Edinburgh, June 5, 1777. (112) no date. (133) Mar. 10, 1779. (149) May 11, (153) Nov. 6, 1781. (219) Feb. 27, (225) July 30, 1788. (232) Aug. 25, 1791.
115. From M. de Buffon ; Paris, Oct. 25, 1777.
117. From Mme. du Deffand ; Paris, Nov. 12, 1777.
123. From Dr. Chelsum ; Oxford, Mar. 6, 1778.
139. From Mme. de Genlis ; Paris, Oct. 15, 1779. (174) St. Leu, July 3, 1783.
151. From Sir William Jones ; London, June 30, 1781.
152. From Lord Hardwicke ; Wimple, Sept. 20, 1881.
162. From Dr. Priestley ; Birmingham, Feb. 3, 1782. (164) Feb. 10, (166) Feb. 25, 1783.
168. From Lord Thurlow ; no date.
186. From Lord Loughborough ; London, Sept. 11, 1783.
220. From Lord North ; May 1, 1788.
226. From Major Russell ; London, Aug. 21, 1788.
228. From S. E. M. L'Avoyer de Sinner ; Berne, Sept. 28, 1788.
229. From Adam Smith ; Edinburgh, Dec. 10, 1788.
233. From M. de Saussure ; Geneva, Mar. 21, 1792.
234. From Professor Heyne ; Göttingen, Aug. 4, 1792.
235. From M. Necker ; no date. (255) Rolle, Mar. 19, (263) Lausanne, Nov., 1793.
254. From Sir John Macpherson ; Munich, Dec. 4, 1792.
258. From Dr. Vincent ; London, July 20, (259) July 22, 1793.
261. From Mr. John Pinkerton ; London, July 23, 1793.

From *Le Salon de Madame Necker* :

From Susanne Curchod ; Lausanne, about February 1758.

From Susanne Curchod ; three letters ; Geneva, May 30, June 17, Sept. 21, 1763.

Besides these last, relating to Gibbon's early engagement to Mdlle. Curchod, one of the latter's letters, dated Nov. 5, 1758, is quoted in part in *Proceedings of the Gibbon Commemoration*, p. 40, and from a hint in *The Girlhood of Maria Josepha Holroyd*,¹ it may be inferred that there are some others from that lady among the unpublished Gibbon papers.

All students of Gibbon will be grateful to the recent editor of the letters for many new ones and for restoring omitted passages in others. The admirable notes and the exhaustive index are no inconsiderable favors. Yet it is in the highest degree unfortunate that some sixty letters which have been printed before or were easily accessible should have been omitted entirely, to say nothing of more than eighty letters from prominent people which add something to the historian's life.

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¹ 'The other papers [from Lausanne] were mostly letters from different people, and it astonished me to find what sort of letters he kept. There are several love letters of Madame Necker's among them. If the papers had fallen into the hands of a Boswell what fun the world would have had.'—*Maria Josepha to Miss Ann Firth*, p. 293.